

2ND PRIZE

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Section B.

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A Historical and Geographical Survey of the Dominion
of South Africa.

"Life of
General Smuts
by Sarah G.
Millin.

The dominion of South Africa is the one I have chosen for my historical and geographical survey. Firstly I have travelled throughout many parts of South Africa, and thus I feel a personal interest in its development, and secondly one cannot but agree with General Smuts when he said, "How dull are the dominions of Australia and New Zealand. How inspiring by contrast, the active humanity, even the inactive humanity of South Africa."

"South Africa"
by J. H. H. Meyer.

South Africa is a great plateau tilted up at the eastern end. Its central position has always made it the meeting place of many nations. Cape Town in fact, in days gone by was called the "Tavern of the seas", and Lawrence Green in his book of that name has given delightful descriptions of the different characters who entered this harbour. The shores surrounding South Africa are uninviting and dangerous. Very rightly the Cape was called "The Cape of Storms", and that name is perhaps more suited than the one into which it was changed, namely "The Cape of Good Hope". Most of the river mouths in this dominion are blocked by bars of sand. The country suffers from a lack of inland waterways, and all these facts help us to understand "why settlement lagged so far behind discovery". Nature indeed has done little to hasten the geographical development of the country, but the temperate climate has in some way helped to overcome these difficulties.

South Africa extends from the Cape Agulhas to the Zambezi and at present it consists of five provinces, the Cape Province, Natal, Orange Free State, the Transvaal,

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South West Africa, and there is also the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It was the Portuguese explorers who discovered the Cape, and names such as Vasco da Gama and Bartholomew Diaz will never be forgotten while South Africa lives. In 1486 Bartholomew Diaz sailed round the Cape of Good Hope. The Portuguese did not think it worth while to establish any permanent settlement on the shores of the stormy Cape. All they needed it for was as a refreshment centre at which they could obtain fresh water and vegetables to prevent the dreaded scurvy. Nearly five hun-

"Romance of the Empire" by I. Colvin. For many years the story of South Africa was the tale of "A great struggle for the wealth of the east".

"Romance of the Empire" by I. Colvin.

In 1648 a Dutch ship, "The Haabtem" was wrecked in Table Bay and two Dutch seamen, later returning to Holland, told of the temperate climate and beauty of this faraway Cape, and they managed to urge the Dutch to found a settlement. In 1652 Jan van Riebeeck arrived to establish an empire colony and he stated, "all declare that nowhere a fitter has been found of such good land and water as are found here in this little corner of the Cape".

"Romance of the Empire" by I. Colvin.

For some years the Dutch East India Company ruled establishing "a narrow monopoly". The colonists were continually troubled by the Hottentots who lived at the Cape. These small yellow people raided the farms stealing fruit, vegetables and cattle. It was their petty thieving which led to many Kaffir wars which followed one after the other. After van Riebeeck there were other Dutch governors. The one who left the greatest influence on the country was perhaps Simon van der Stel. The Dutch had determined to stay now

"General Smuts" by Sarah. G. Millin.

for "They had fallen in love with loneliness, they gave up, for a

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continent of savages, the close things of Holland - the checkerboard floors and the checkerboard fields. "Simon van der stel travelled into the interior. He persuaded families of white settlers to go inland and leave the more crowded peninsular and cultivate the soil of the rich valleys he had found. He himself went as far as Namaqua. "Romance of the land, winning from the Namaquas", "The Great secret of the Empire" by I. Orange River", which he was the first to place on the map of Colvri. Africa. He planted trees, oak trees in particular, and much later Lady Anne Barnard, from whose letters we get such an interesting picture of life at the Cape, says in "letters of Lady Stellenbosch", "whatever way one walks one finds an avenue." Anne Barnard.

In 1688 the Edict of Nantes caused many persecuted Huguenots to leave France and seek a new home across the seas. A hundred and seventy six of these men, women and children settled at the Cape and their influence is still felt today. There are still names all over the Union of South Africa such as du Plessis, Bleriot, de Villiers, Malan. These French colonists taught the Dutch colonists the art of vine culture, and wine making. They looked upon the Colony as home and still today their influence is seen in the architecture of the Cape.

All this time a strong dissatisfaction was growing up amongst the Dutch Burghers. They were governed by magistrates called Landroosts and Heemradem. The marauding natives grew more and more troublesome and the colonists trekked further and further north hoping to escape these troubles, but in fact meeting more. They developed new lands and from now on we begin to see the real expansion of the country.

In 1795 owing to war in Europe the Prince of Orange

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with whom Britain was in alliance, ordered the commissioner at the Cape to admit the English as a friendly power. In 1802 when the Treaty of Amiens was signed it said that the Cape of Good Hope should go back to the Batavian Republic. New military districts were formed and stock breeding and agriculture were encouraged. Later in 1806 the Cape was again taken by Britain.

In 1820 a great encouragement was given to the life of the colony. Great distress prevailed in England after the battle of Waterloo (1815). The British Government voted £50,000 for an emigration scheme; and in 1820 five thousand immigrants arrived in the Eastern part of the Cape colony. Their interesting but perilous life is described by one of them Thomas Pringle who told "How fires were lighted to scare away wild beasts".

"Expansion of South Africa" by A. Wilmot.

"Romance of the Empire by I. Columi." These settlers were a good hardworking type. They grew pumpkins, melons and beetroot, and in short, "did every thing that Van Riebeeck had done when he came to Table Valley two hundred years before". With the 1820 settlers "South

"In Search of South Africa" by H.V. Morton.

Africa received her third injection of Good European blood.

In 1836 the great trek to the north began. Owing to much dissatisfaction against the government, many organised bands of settlers set off to get away from the imitations of British rule, and to enjoy the freedom of a free life. Various parties were led by men whose names are known all over South Africa, such as, Piet Retief, Van Rensburg, Potgieter and Maritz. Eric Walker says, "The great Trek is the central event in South African history. The folk who went out of the Cape Colony a hundred years ago went because their ideas and mode of life were threatened by changing circumstances". It had lasting and widespread

"The Great Trek" by Eric Walker.

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results. The great adventure led to many interesting events in the history of South Africa. It led to wars with the Zulus and Matabele. The 16th December is still revered as "Dingans Day" in South Africa commemorating the defeat of Dingaan and his hordes at the Blood River, Natal, by the Voortrekkers. Geographically too this journey into the unknown at last led to the formation of the republics of the Orange Free State, and Transvaal, and to the foundation of Natal. Later Britain took over these countries. There was and still is much disagreement as to the fairness of this action. The mass of people of Dutch birth was indignant that the country over which the Voortrekkers had shed their blood should be "expansion of taken," By the Pharaoh from whose bondage they had South Africa, escaped."

by A. Wilmot.

"General Smuts"

by S. G. Millin.

In 1870, "The New South Africa was born. It was ushered in into a world by the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley". The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand further increased the growth of South Africa. Then followed the saddest part of the history of South Africa which was the quarrel between Britain and Boers. H.V.

In search of

South Africa,

by H.V. Morton.

Morton says this was a family dispute, "Between two brothers conducted on a railway line in the path of an advancing express". After the Boer war republicanism was dead, but today it is a very important factor in the History of South Africa under the Nationalist Government. The Second Boer war lasted longer than was expected.

"South Africa,"

by J.H. Hofmeyr.

The British were the victors, but "Important was the sense of mutual respect to which the war gave birth."

In 1910 the union of the Provinces of South Africa, a remarkable achievement so soon after the Boer

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"South Africa", was, became an accomplished fact where, "The leaders of by J.H. Hoymeyer, the defeated peoples were now entrusted with the government of the British colony".

The rebellion of 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War was crushed by Smuts and Botha. After 1918 South Africa added another province to its four, the province of South West Africa which had been German before, and had been taken by Smuts and Botha.

The years from 1918-1949 have seen many changes of Government in South Africa under the leadership of Botha and Smuts, Hertzog, a Coalition, Smuts again and finally under the leadership of the present Nationalist Dr Malan.

South Africa"

"Ceil Rhodes as far back as 1883 had stated, by J.H. Hoymeyer, I believe that confederated states in a colony under Responsible Government would each be practically an independant republic with all the privileges of the tie with the Empire".

Smuts had said in London in 1917 "no one outside a lunatic asylum wants to force young nations in a particular mould", and eventually in 1926 by the Statute of Westminster S.A. entered into the great assembly as one of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Finally if one visits the Voortrekker museum in Petermaritzburg, the Koopman de Wet Museum in Strand Street in Cape Town and the Drostduys at Tulbagh, Swellendam and Grahamstown one can trace the interesting historical and geographical history of the country. H.V. Morton sums it up in his closing paragraphs, he says "In Search of I saw, "Kruiger, Rhodes and Lobengula; Potgieter and Harry South Africa" Smith; the Voortrekkers; Piet Retief and Dingaan; Farewell by H.V. Morton.

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King and Shaka; the 1820 settlers, Pringle and Somerset, Lady Anne Barnard and the first British; a century of Dutch Governors, the Huguenots, and last - and first - Jan Anthony Van Riebeeck with his South Africans. After unnumbered ages of silence, history it seems was determined to crowd as much as possible into three South African centuries, as it to make up for lost time.

List of books and authors used in this essay.

"Life of General Smuts" by Sarah C. Millin.

"South Africa" by J.H. Hofmeyer

"Romance of the Empire" by I. Colvin.

"Expansion of South Africa" by A. Wilms.

"Letters of Lady Anne Barnard" by Lady Anne Barnard.

"In Search of South Africa" by H.V. Morton.

"The Great Trek" by Eric Walker.

"Life of Louis Botha" by Dr F.V. Engelenburg.

"The Tavern of the Seas" by Lawrence Green.